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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 0022
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000133

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KIRF](#) [VT](#) [IR](#) [HO](#) [UG](#) [UNGA](#)

SUBJECT: (C) VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTER ON AMCITS DETAINED IN IRAN,
HONDURAS, UGANDA, UN VOTE ON RELIGIOUS DEFAMATION, AND U.S. HEALTH
CARE DEBATE

REF: A. VATICAN 99 (HONDURAS)

[1](#)B. VATICAN 130 (UGANDA)

[1](#)C. MCGEENEY-NOYES EMAIL OF DECEMBER 15, 2009 (DEFAMATION)

CLASSIFIED BY: Julieta Valls Noyes, DCM, EXEC, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Begin Summary and Introduction: At a December 16 meeting requested by Ambassador Diaz, the Vatican's Foreign Minister said the Papal Nuncio in Iran has been asked to intercede in the case of three Amcits detained there; Mamberti said the Vatican would be pleased to be of assistance in that case, on humanitarian grounds. Ambassador Diaz, accompanied by DCM, raised with Archbishop Mamberti the latest situation in Honduras, proposed Ugandan legislation criminalizing homosexuality, and the upcoming vote at the UN General Assembly plenary on a defamation of religions resolution. AB Mamberti also raised the U.S. health care debate. End Summary and Introduction

Iran: Parents Asked Vatican to Intercede for Detained Amcits

[1](#)2. (S) Archbishop Mamberti brought up the case of three American citizens detained in Iran. The Vatican understood that Iranian officials had announced they would be tried, but for illegal entry, not for espionage. Mamberti indicated that the parents of the three Americans had contacted the Vatican directly to seek intervention on behalf of their children. The Foreign Minister said the Papal Nuncio in Iran was in close contact with the Swiss Ambassador there, and that the two of them were trying to arrange a visit to the Amcits by the Nuncio over the Christmas holiday period. The Nuncio would be pleased to pass messages to the Americans. The Vatican would be willing to intercede in this case on humanitarian grounds, Mamberti said.

Honduras: Lobos is President-Elect; Peaceful Transition Needed

¶3. (C) Ambassador briefed Mamberti on the latest developments and asked for Vatican support in Honduras to expedite formation of a national unity government, and in Latin America generally for recognition of the November 29 elections. Mamberti replied that the Vatican is watching the situation in Honduras very closely. He asked about specific impediments to formation of a national unity government and also about the proposed role for the truth commission. The Foreign Minister implied, but did not say directly, that the Vatican might deliver behind-the-scenes messages in support of these goals. Insofar as a direct statement from the Pope recognizing the elections, Mamberti said that was not/not likely at this time. Nevertheless, Mamberti referred to Pepe Lobos as the elected President of Honduras and said the international community needed to put itself "at President Lobos' service" to prevent violence in Honduras.

Uganda: Church Considers Sexuality a Moral, not Penal, Issue

¶4. (C) Further to ref B, and in light of the continued silence of the Ugandan bishops on proposed legislation to criminalize (and in extreme cases, impose the death penalty for) homosexuality, Ambassador Diaz asked the Vatican to weigh in with the Ugandan Episcopal Conference. Mamberti replied that the Church's view about the sinfulness of homosexuality is well-known. Nevertheless, the Church also teaches that sexual relations between consenting adults are a moral, not penal, issue. They should not be brought before the courts. In addition, the Church is opposed to the death penalty as a general rule. Mamberti registered the USG concerns about the legislation, but did not commit to contacting the Ugandan bishops about it. He said, however, that he was certain the bishops would not remain silent for long on such an important moral issue.

UNGA Plenary Vote on Defamation Resolution: Vatican Will Lobby

¶5. (C) Mamberti was very familiar with the status of this resolution at the UNGA, and with the complex legal and human rights issues associated with it. He said he had discussed the Vatican's views on the defamation of religion concept with the U.S. Commissioners for International Religious Freedom during their recent visit, but did not think the commissioners had understood the nuances of the Holy See's position. The Vatican, he said, did not support the resolution or related arguments posited by Islamic countries. The Vatican supports full freedom of expression on all matters; it also believes individuals

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should exercise that freedom responsibly, in a manner that does not incite violence or social unrest. Rights reside in individuals not in groups, Mamberti affirmed. Ambassador Diaz requested that Vatican diplomats lobby Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala and Belize to move their Third Committee abstention on this issue to a no vote in Plenary, and Honduras and El Salvador to move from a yes to an abstention. Mamberti said he would call the Vatican's UN PermRep, Archbishop Migliore, to instruct

him to do so.

U.S. Health Care Debate: No Abortion Funding

¶6. (SBU) Mamberti asked the Ambassador about the status of the health care legislation now pending before the U.S. Senate, and reiterated the concerns expressed by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops that the final version of the legislation not contain funding for abortion.

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